

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE GRANT RECIPIENT FOR 1998: REGIONAL STEWARDSHIP CENTER

Grant Recipient: Lightstone Foundation
Grant Title: Regional Stewardship Center
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Project Period: 8/15/98 - 8/15/02
Affected Areas: Potomac Highlands Region: including Berkeley, Grant, Hampshire, Hardy, Jefferson, Mineral, Morgan, Pendleton, Tucker, Pocahontas and Monroe Counties.

INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT RATIONALE

The Regional Stewardship Center Project is a three-year plan to develop a Regional Stewardship Center on *Lightstone Foundation's* property at the headwaters of the Potomac River. The Center will serve to demonstrate watershed restoration, sustainable forestry and farming, and community-based development in surrounding areas to help reverse previous environmental degradation to the area. As a matching project component, *Habitat for Humanity* volunteers will be given hands-on training opportunities in constructing ecological dormitories and community buildings, and apply such environmentally-friendly and cost-saving technology to increase Habitat's capacity to build affordable, ecological houses for low-income families.

Past environmental degradation – such as extensive deforestation at the turn of the 20th century, and the more recent rise of the poultry industry and draining of untreated sewage into area streams – has resulted in great social and economic hardship in the surrounding rural communities. Lightstone Foundation and its partners have been working to reverse such trends, bringing economic, environmental, and community stability back into the Potomac Highlands region.

The Potomac River itself was designated as one of ten American Heritage Rivers (AHR) by President Clinton in 1998 – a new program which aides communities in protecting and improving water and waterfront areas. This project will take advantage of the Potomac River's AHR designation by using it as a vehicle for focusing national attention on the watershed as a model for sustainable development.

SCOPE OF WORK

Lightstone Foundation and its partners propose a three-year plan to develop a Regional Stewardship Center on its 600 acre certified organic farm located by the Potomac River headwaters. The Foundation has identified five main goals which they hope to accomplish using Sustainable Development Challenge Grant funds, which are as follows:

Goal 1: Collaborate with partnering organizations and other schools, civic groups, environmental organizations, businesses, farmers and individuals to design and build a Regional Stewardship Center and dormitory space using ecologically sound building technologies, to support sustainable environmental protection and economic development

- Goal 2: Increase the capacity of Habitat for Humanity to work with local residents and other volunteers to fully participate in ecological learning, as they build eco-friendly homes for low-income persons.
- Goal 3: Work with teachers, administrators, students, parents and community members from four county school systems to develop a Stewardship Academy that focuses on helping groups discover, design and implement community stewardship projects as an integral part of the school curriculum.
- Goal 4: Practice and support sustainable micro-enterprising by providing hands-on learning and by providing technical and financial assistance through a nationally recognized micro-loan fund and a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) that can effectively leverage other public and private investment in the community to support sustainable community development, such as sustainable forestry, value-added timber processing, ecological building construction methods, and community supported agriculture.
- Goal 5: Develop a variety of public workshops, conferences, media events, and an Internet web page as tools for replication, to help catalyze and support community-based and regional projects to promote sustainable development, as well as to provide tools that can be shares by communities nationwide.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Lighthouse Foundation will work in collaboration with the following organizations and schools, as well as the greater community, to practice and support sustainable family farming, natural resource management, and rural community-based development:

Almost Heaven Habitat for Humanity
Annenberg Rural Challenge
Environmental Planning and Design
Grant County School System
Hampshire County Development Authority
Hampshire County School System
Kellogg Foundation

Lightstone Community Development Corp.
Mineral County School System
Monroe County School System
Mountain CAP of West Virginia
National Wildlife Federation
Thorn Creek Watershed Association
West Virginia Stream Partners